

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 INR-10 SS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
H-01 MSC-01 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 HA-09 L-03 TRSE-00
PM-10 PA-01 OMB-01 INRE-00 USIE-00 SP-02 SNP-01
C-01 PRS-01 P-02 T-01 /045 W
-----334777 231749Z /43

P 231557Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4158
INFO FRG COLLECTIVE
ZENXX/AMCONSUL STUTTGART 3714
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE//POLAD//
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE//POLAD//
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE//POLAD//

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 40133

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, GE
SUBJECT: BANGEMANN AND THE FDP--IN A STEW

1. SECRET--ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: RUMORS ARE RIFE THAT MARTIN BANGEMANN WANTS
TO GIVE UP HIS CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE FDP AND MOVE TO
BRUSSELS TO THE EC COMMISSION. HE IS STILL SMARTING FROM
THE HARSH CRITICISM OF HIS HANDLING OF THE INTERNAL
SECURITY ISSUE (ESPECIALLY THE VERMUMMUNGSVERBOT OR "LAW
AGAINST WEARING MASKS DURING DEMONSTRATIONS"), WHICH
NECESSITATED A SPECIAL--AND HIGHLY UNPOPULAR--CONVENTION
ON THE SUBJECT IN MANNHEIM ON DECEMBER 12 (BONN 39255).
MOVING QUICKLY TO FILL ANY POSSIBLE VACUUM FDP ECONOMICS
SPOKESMAN OTTO GRAF LAMBSDORFF HAS PUBLICALLY INDICATED
HIS INTEREST IN THE CHAIRMANSHIP. THE ENSUING PUBLIC
DEBATE OVER BANGEMANN'S FUTURE AND POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS HAS
LED TO WARNINGS FROM CHANCELLOR KOHL, FOREIGN MINISTER
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GENSCHER, AND FDP CAUCUS CHAIRMAN WOLFGANG MISCHNICK ABOUT
THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SUCH PREMATURE SPECULATION.
HOWEVER, THE FREE-FOR-ALL SHOWS NO SIGNS OF ABATING. END
SUMMARY.

"DAMNING BANGEMANN WITH FAINT PRAISE"

3. DELEGATES AT THE MANNHEIM CONVENTION MADE THEIR DISSATISFACTION WITH BANGEMANN KNOWN. HIS RATHER HALF-HEARTED DEFENSE OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP'S DECISION TO SUPPORT THE COALITION'S PROPOSED INTERNAL SECURITY MEASURES WAS POORLY RECEIVED, AND POINTED CALLS FROM PARTY FRIENDS TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR THE CHAIRMAN GOT EMBARRASSINGLY LITTLE RESPONSE. THE TACK TAKEN BY GENSCHER AND LAMBSDORFF MUST HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY GALLING TO BANGEMANN. HOW, THEY ASKED, DID THE FDP LET ITSELF BE MANOEVERED INTO THIS CORNER BY THE CSU? A SPECIAL CONVENTION ON SUCH A RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT ISSUE, THEY SAID, WASTES TIME AND OVERSHADOWS OUR SUCCESSES, ESPECIALLY IN FOREIGN POLICY AND ARMS CONTROL. CLEARLY, IT WAS BANGEMANN THEY WERE CRITICIZING.

ALTHOUGH 52 PERCENT OF THE DELEGATES EVENTUALLY VOTED IN FAVOR OF TOUGHER DEMONSTRATION LAWS, THEIR MOTIVES WERE MIXED. IN THE END, IT WAS A VOTE TO SUPPORT THE FDP LEADERSHIP AS A WHOLE AND TO EXPRESS DEFIANCE OF CSU INTERIOR MINISTER FRIEDERICH ZIMMERMANN, CHIEF PROPONENT IN KOHL'S CABINET OF THIS AND EVEN TOUGHER DEMONSTRATION LAWS. THE CONVENTION WAS AS MUCH A DEBATE OVER THE FDP'S FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COALITION AS IT WAS AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROBLEM OF INTERNAL SECURITY.

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LAMBSDORFF LAMING THE DUCK FURTHER

5. BANGEMANN'S AUTHORITY WAS CLEARLY SHAKEN BY THE CONVENTION AND THE EVENTS WHICH LED UP TO IT, AND LAMBSDORFF'S ANNOUNCEMENT WILL ONLY MAKE BANGEMANN'S JOB TOUGHER. AT SOME POINT, HE WILL HAVE TO DECIDE EITHER TO TRY TO SHORE UP SUPPORT FOR HIS CHAIRMANSHIP OR GO WHOLE-HEARTEDLY AFTER THE JOB IN BRUSSELS. UNFORTUNATELY, TIME IS NOT ON HIS SIDE: UNTIL THE FRENCH ELECTION IN JUNE, IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE EC PRESIDENCY WILL BE AVAILABLE.

6. FOR HIS PART, LAMBSDORFF SAYS HE WANTS TO BE FDP PARTY CHAIRMAN BUT DOES NOT WANT TO SERVE IN THE KOHL CABINET. WITHOUT THE RESTRAINT OF CABINET DISCIPLINE, THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM GOES, HE WOULD HAVE GREATER FREEDOM TO STAND UP FOR LIBERAL, I.E., FDP, VALUES. (COMMENT: BANGEMANN HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY CRITICIZED BY THE PARTY RANK-AND-FILE FOR ALLEGEDLY CAVING IN TOO OFTEN TO THE COALITION PARTNERS, ESPECIALLY TO ZIMMERMAN.) LAMBSDORFF

IS OBVIOUSLY A SEASONED VETERAN WITH A REPUTATION FOR STRONG LEADERSHIP. DELEGATES AT THE CONVENTION WERE HEARD TO GRUMBLE THAT HAD LAMBSDORFF BEEN IN CHARGE, THE PARTY WOULD NOT HAVE GOTTEN ITSELF INTO SUCH A FIX THAT EVERYONE HAD TO TURN OUT FOR A CONVENTION ON A SATURDAY IN ADVENT]

7. STILL, A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PARTY MEMBERS OPPOSE LAMBSDORFF'S CANDIDACY BECAUSE OF HIS ALLEGED PAST INVOLVEMENT WITH ILLEGAL PARTY FINANCING AND HIS RECENT CONVICTION FOR TAX EVASION. THIS PERCEIVED LACK OF INTEGRITY IS A SERIOUS IMPEDIMENT AT A TIME WHEN OPINION POLLS ARE SHOWING THE PUBLIC'S GREAT MISTRUST OF

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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 40133

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POLITICIANS IN GENERAL, IN THE WAKE OF THE BARSCHEL
AFFAIR. FURTHERMORE, LAMBSDORFF IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE
RIGHT WING OF THE PARTY. IN AN EFFORT TO BROADEN HIS
APPEAL, HE HAS RECENTLY CRITICIZED THE TOUGHER
DEMONSTRATION LAWS PROPOSED BY THE CABINET AND THE SPECIAL
PLEA-BARGAINING PROVISION BACKED BY THE CSU AS
"ANTI-LIBERAL."

WAITING IN THE WINGS

8. OF COURSE, OTHER POSSIBLE CANDIDATES ARE BEING
DISCUSSED. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN WOLFGANG GERHARDT, WHOSE NAME
IS REGULARLY MENTIONED, HAS SAID PUBLICALLY THAT HE IS NOT
A CANDIDATE. THE MEDIA REPORTS THAT HE IS, IN FACT,

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APPEALING TO BANGEMANN TO FINISH HIS TERM OF OFFICE. HE IS AMBITIOUS AND SELF-CONFIDENT, HOWEVER, AND COULD PROBABLY BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT. FOREIGN OFFICE STATE MINISTER IRMGARD ADAM-SCHWAETZER HAS NOT PUBLICALLY ANNOUNCED HER CANDIDACY, BUT SHE HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED A LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO BANGEMANN. SHE HAS THE SUPPORT OF GENSCHER, A REPUTATION FOR INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE, AND THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A WOMAN AND A MEMBER OF THE "YOUNGER" GENERATION WHEN THE FDP IS TRYING TO ATTRACT NEW VOTERS FROM THESE GROUPS. HOWEVER, SHE DOES SEEM TO LACK A COMMANDING PRESENCE AND SHE DOES NOT IMPRESS AS A SPEAKER. AT THE MANNHEIM CONVENTION, LAMBSDORFF CLEARLY OUTSHONE HER IN HIS ABILITY TO MOVE THE AUDIENCE AND GET HIS POINTS ACROSS. HIS GREATER EXPERIENCE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE WERE EVIDENT.

ANOTHER BUNGLING IN THE MAKING?

9. AS SEVERAL PARTY LEADERS HAVE POINTED OUT, SPECULATION IN THE MEDIA ABOUT BANGEMANN'S FUTURE PLANS IS A RATHER CRUDE WAY TO ANNOUNCE A POSSIBLE GERMAN CANDIDATE FOR THE EC PRESIDENCY AND ONE WHICH COULD RUIN THE FRG'S CHANCES FOR GETTING IT. ONE IS REMINDED OF THE UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDACY OF KURT BIEDENKOPF IN 1984 OR, MORE RECENTLY, OF THE RATHER UNDIPLOMATIC HANDLING BY THE GERMANS OF THE WOERNER CANDIDACY.

COMMENT: NO MATTER HOW REASONABLE, CURRENT CALLS FROM KOHL, GENSCHER, ET.AL., TO "COOL IT" ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT. THE MEDIA HYPE HAS ALREADY BEGUN, AND WOULD-BE SUCCESSORS ARE LINING UP. THE FDP WILL STEW UNTIL BANGEMANN STEPS DOWN, PROBABLY BEFORE THE REGULAR
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FDP PARTY CONVENTION ALREADY SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER. CHANCELLOR KOHL IS SURELY MONITORING THE SITUATION VERY CAREFULLY. IT IS WELL-KNOWN THAT HE WANTS BANGEMANN TO STAY IN BONN. LAMBSDORFF OR ADAM-SCHWAETZER, IN HIS VIEW, WOULD BE FAR LESS CONGENIAL "PARTNERS."

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